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The Hanoverian Succession and the Fragmentation of Scottish Protestantism

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This chapter examines the politics of Scottish presbyterianism in the years surrounding George I's accession to the throne. The Hanoverian succession, it argues, was central to the controversy that led a small group of ministers and their followers to separate from the Church of Scotland in the mid-1710s. Led by the long-standing dissident John Hepburn, three ministers in the south-west entirely disowned the Church. Though they agreed on various points of principle with the other dissenting minister in the region, John Macmillan, the preacher to the radical United Societies, they failed to join forces with his group. When Hepburn and his associates set up a presbytery on their own, they were the first presbyterian ministers since the restoration of presbyterianism in 1690 to create a formal church court parallel to those of the established Kirk. In this respect, they preceded the formation of other presbyterian Churches outwith the establishment in the first half of the eighteenth century: the Secession Church, founded in 1733, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which organised its first presbytery (of which Macmillan was a member) in 1743. Unlike these groups, the separatists of the 1710s did not coalesce into an enduring denomination. Some of the three ministers' followers returned to the Church of Scotland, reflecting the fluid nature of presbyterian dissent in the early eighteenth century. Nevertheless, their arguments and actions make clear that there was already much potential for schism among Scottish presbyterians. Moreover, a study of Hepburn and his brethren illuminates the ambiguous attitudes of some Scottish presbyterians towards the Hanoverian succession.

If the Hanoverian succession stimulated presbyterian nonconformity, it soon had a damaging impact on the largest body of protestant dissenters in Scotland: the episcopalians. After the restoration of presbyterianism, most of the episcopalian ministers who had formerly held parish livings remained aloof from the Church, despite the government's efforts in the early 1690s to unite the rival groups of clergy. Probably no more than ten per cent of episcopalian ministers conformed to the re-established Kirk. Episcopalians were especially reluctant to cooperate with presbyterians in the north-east and highlands, where the Church at first had few ministers and little lay support. Following an act of parliament of 1695, around 116 episcopalians swore allegiance to King William in order to retain the parishes they held before the revolution, without cooperating with the presbyterian church courts. But most

episcopalian clergy were Jacobites who had been removed from their former livings, and were now liable to prosecution.¹ Furthermore, the episcopalians became increasingly distinct from the presbyterians, promoting a divine-right understanding of episcopacy, adopting the English Prayer Book in public worship, and departing from Calvinist theological orthodoxy.² The early 1710s was an optimistic moment for the episcopalians. Parliament granted toleration for episcopalian worship for the first time in 1712, even non-jurors enjoyed considerable freedom of operation where local magistrates were sympathetic, and it looked possible that Queen Anne's death would lead to a Jacobite restoration. But the peaceful accession of George, and the failed Jacobite rising of 1715, shattered such hopes and prompted more stringent enforcement of the laws against Jacobite clergy.³ By the middle of the decade, then, the episcopalian challenge to the Church was in decline, while the threat posed by presbyterian dissent seemed to be growing.

The chapter begins by surveying the hard-line presbyterians' objections to the established Church. Lay people within and on the fringes of the Church, together with some of its ministers, criticised the settlement of 1690 as insufficiently true to presbyterian values, and found fault with the crown's attempts to manage Scottish religious policy. A series of developments in the last years of Anne's reign – the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707 and the statutes of 1712 introducing toleration for episcopalians and restoring the rights of lay patrons – made presbyterian dissent a more significant problem. The chapter then examines the origins of the secession in the south-west in detail. The main precipitating development was the imposition on clergy of a controversial oath abjuring the Stuart claimant to the throne. Though many ministers in the south-west refused to swear, Hepburn and his colleagues claimed that the clergy who did so had reneged on presbyterian principles, compelling the godly to withdraw from the Church. John Taylor, one of Hepburn's allies, had pre-existing differences with his brethren, and his actions show that there was a degree of opportunism in the schism. Nevertheless, the chapter contends that the three ministers and their followers

¹ See esp. Tristram Clarke, 'The Williamite Episcopalians and the Glorious Revolution in Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 24 (1990-2), 33-51; Thomas Maxwell, 'The Church Union Attempt at the General Assembly of 1692', in Duncan Shaw, ed., *Reformation and Revolution: Essays presented to the Very Reverend Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt* (Edinburgh, 1967), 237-57.

² Alasdair Raffe, 'Presbyterians and Episcopalians: The Formation of Confessional Cultures in Scotland, 1660-1715', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), 570-98.

³ Tristram N. Clarke, 'The Scottish Episcopalians, 1688-1720' (University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1987), chs 5-7. More generally, see Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion* (New Haven, CT, 2006).

developed a coherent body of arguments in favour of separation, as well as a damaging critique of the Hanoverian succession.

##

From soon after its re-establishment in 1690, the Church of Scotland was menaced by presbyterian dissent, especially in the south and west. Of the two main strands of dissident presbyterianism, however, only the United Societies (or ‘Cameronians’) consistently advocated full separation from the Church. Constituted in the early 1680s of the most radical presbyterian nonconformists, the group was a network of lay prayer societies whose members repudiated their allegiance to Charles II and James VII. Taking advantage of the rugged upland terrain of southern Scotland, the Societies worshipped in large outdoors gatherings, in spite of serious government suppression. After the revolution of 1688-90, the Societies’ three ministers and a part of its lay membership joined the re-established Church. A minority remained committed to the Societies’ founding principles, refusing to acknowledge the Church or the post-revolution monarchs, because they failed formally to recognise the National Covenant (1638) and the Solemn League and Covenant (1643). The Societies remained a lay body until 1706, when John Macmillan became their minister.⁴ Thereafter, they closely resembled the other significant dissenting body, the adherents of John Hepburn. He had been a parish minister since the revolution, but refused to attend church courts or observe ministerial discipline, and preached itinerantly across the south-west. Frequently investigated by the general assembly and its commission, Hepburn was deposed from the ministry in 1705. This sentence was overturned in 1707, however, and Hepburn continued his irregular preaching.⁵ Neither the Societies nor the ‘Hebronites’ were numerous – probably the regular following of each group was no more than a few thousand people – but their proclamations and pamphlets reached a wide audience within the Church, giving them an influence out of proportion to their numbers.⁶

⁴ Mark Jardine, ‘The United Societies: Militancy, Martyrdom and the Presbyterian Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland, 1679 to 1688’ (University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 2009); Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: Its Origin and History, 1680-1876* (Paisley, 1893); H.M.B. Reid, *A Cameronian Apostle: Being some account of John Macmillan of Balmaghie* (Paisley, 1896).

⁵ William McMillan, *John Hepburn and the Hebronites: A Study in the Post-Revolution History of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1934). There is further information on both groups in Douglas W.B. Somerset, ‘Notes on some Scottish Covenanters and Ultra-Covenanters of the Eighteenth Century’, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, 6 (2016), 87-130.

⁶ See, most particularly, Colin Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-Century British state’, *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 1147-76. See also Richard J. Finlay, ‘Keeping

Given that Scottish presbyterianism endured a major schism in the 1650s, and that the Cameronians of the 1680s had refused to cooperate with most ministers, the re-established Church was remarkably harmonious and disciplined in its first two decades.⁷ The Church achieved this coherence by emphasising uniformity in doctrine and worship. In this, presbyterians contrasted with the episcopalians, who embraced a spectrum of views from mysticism to Calvinism, and whose clergy were not required to subscribe to any confession of faith.⁸ But in the pursuit of presbyterian purity, ministers of the Kirk risked being surpassed by such hard-liners as Hepburn and Macmillan. In essence, these men stood for a stricter presbyterianism, truer to the Covenants and the acts and declarations of the general assembly during the rule of the Covenanters from 1638 to 1649. Condemning what they saw as the pragmatism of the Church's leaders from 1690, Hepburn and Macmillan campaigned for a ministry less tolerant of opponents and forgiving of backsliders, and more resistant to the encroachments of secular power. It was a prospectus of the grass-roots and the backwoods, an attitude hostile to concessions and accustomed to protest. Even when the commission of the general assembly published a testimony in favour of divine-right presbyterianism, the Hebronites considered the document a 'Grievance it self', a mere 'patching up, and scruffing over [i.e. treating superficially] things complained of'.⁹ In *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way* (1713), the Hebronites expounded no fewer than thirty-four grievances with the state of Scottish presbyterianism. We can use the book, supplemented by the declarations of the Societies, to analyse in more detail the views of the presbyterian dissidents.

The *Humble Pleadings'* first set of complaints related to the efforts of Scottish presbyterians to come to terms with their recent past. The Hebronites thought that there had been too little enquiry into the ways in which presbyterians had compromised their principles between the

the Covenant: Scottish National Identity', in T.M. Devine and J.R. Young (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton, 1999), 121-33; Edward J. Cowan, 'The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History', in Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 121-45.

⁷ On the schism in the 1650s, see Kyle David Holfelder, 'Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: the Protester-Resolutioner Controversy' (University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1999); Gordon Donaldson, 'The Emergence of Schism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland', in Derek Baker, ed., *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, Studies in Church History, 9 (Cambridge, 1972), 277-94.

⁸ Raffe, 'Presbyterians and Episcopalians', esp. 586-7, 596-7.

⁹ *A Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation to some who Separate from the Communion of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1699); [Gavin Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way, or a Plain Representation* ([Edinburgh?], 1713), 127.

Cromwellian invasion in 1650 and the overthrow of James VII in 1689. Among numerous ‘sad steps of Defection’, the Hebronites condemned ministers’ complying with the indulgences of 1669 and 1672, which allowed them to preach under royal licence, and their acceptance of King James’s toleration in 1687.¹⁰ The Kirk’s leadership regarded these matters as ‘not the controversy of Our day’, and sought to accommodate former differences of opinion.¹¹ But the dissidents tended to keep alive the splits of the 1670s and 1680s. Moreover, they argued that the re-established Kirk had not made a sufficiently clean break with the episcopalian past. Ministers who had conformed to episcopacy were admitted to the Church; men who had sworn oaths against presbyterianism were active as elders; politicians complicit in the persecution of presbyterians under Charles II and James VII remained in public office.¹² Both Church and state were too accommodating of the crimes and compromises of the Restoration period.

The fundamental problem with post-revolution presbyterianism, according to the Hebronites and the Societies, was that Scotland had not renewed the Covenants, and that neither the civil nor ecclesiastical reforms of 1689-90 were founded on these national oaths. The Covenants were ‘cast by and Buried’, the Societies declared in 1692, by ministers who did too little to remind Scots of the oaths’ binding force.¹³ Instead of re-establishing the Church on the basis of the Covenants and divine-right presbyterianism, parliament advanced the more relativistic and contingent argument that presbyterian government accorded with the ‘inclinations’ of the people. Ministers did too little, the Hebronites asserted, to call for an unequivocal ratification of presbyterian ecclesiology. The clergy meekly accepted parliament’s decision to restore presbyterianism as it was established in 1592, giving the civil magistrate more authority than it had possessed in 1648-9, the high-water mark of clerical influence under the Covenanters.¹⁴ Related to this, dissident presbyterians alleged that the Church was reluctant to proclaim its ‘intrinsic right’ to exercise jurisdiction in religious affairs without undue royal involvement. This complaint arose in the 1690s from the crown’s summoning, dissolution, and

¹⁰ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 6-10, 46-8, quotation at 7.

¹¹ *Seasonable Admonition and Exhortation*, 15.

¹² [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 7, 10-17, 20-4. See also John Hepburn, *The Last Testimony of the Reverend, Pious and Painful Servant of Christ, Mr John Hepburn* ([Edinburgh?], 1723), 7-8.

¹³ [James Renwick, Alexander Shields *et al.*,] *An Informatory Vindication of a Poor, Wasted, Misrepresented Remnant* ([Edinburgh?], 1707), sig. ¶¶¶r. (quotation); [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 41-6; Hepburn, *Last Testimony*, 7-8.

¹⁴ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 24-33. The reference to the ‘inclinationes of the people’ originated in the revolutionary convention of estates’ Claim of Right (1689) and was echoed in the act re-establishing presbyterianism: see Keith M. Brown *et al.* (eds.), *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, <http://www.rps.ac.uk/> [hereafter RPS], 1689/3/108, 1690/4/43.

management of the general assembly. Under Anne, many presbyterians also objected to the civil authorities' appointment of national fast and thanksgiving days, without consulting the church courts.¹⁵ These grievances reflected a more general sense that the Kirk was subject to 'Erastian' interference by the civil magistrate, manifested in parliament's requirement, introduced in 1693, that ministers swear allegiance to the reigning monarchs. The imposition of the oath, together with the management of the assembly, seriously undermined the Church's autonomy and ministers' freedom.¹⁶ As the Societies put it in 1695, the Church stood on a 'plat-form of Mock-Presbytrie', and could not claim to be the real thing.¹⁷

Many of these criticisms were overstated. Contrary to what the dissenters said, the Church of Scotland's ministers upheld divine-right presbyterianism, taught that the Covenants remained relevant to the nation's religious life, and endeavoured to see the intrinsic right respected.¹⁸ But the clergy's efforts in the late 1690s and early 1700s to respond to the dissidents had little lasting effect. The passage of Anglo-Scottish parliamentary union in 1707 dismayed many presbyterians, adding to the strength of the Hebronites' complaints. Most presbyterian ministers opposed the union, seeing it as incompatible with the Covenants and a threat to the ecclesiastical settlement of 1690.¹⁹ But while the commission of the general assembly expressed its concerns in addresses to parliament in late 1706 and early 1707, mainstream ministers were insufficiently outspoken to satisfy the hard-liners. The Societies protested that the clergy, though at first they stoutly condemned the union in their sermons and conversation, became 'generally so dumb, silent, indifferent or ambiguous'. After the union had passed, the Hebronites asserted, '*Ministers* generally ceased from their former Testimony' against it.²⁰

Not only did strict presbyterians call into question the clergy's faithfulness in 1706-7, but some of the gloomier predictions about the union were soon proved prescient. In 1712, the

¹⁵ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 33-41, 60-79; Alasdair Raffé, 'Presbyterianism, Secularization, and Scottish Politics after the Revolution of 1688-1690', *Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 317-37.

¹⁶ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 79-85; *RPS*, 1693/4/50.

¹⁷ [Renwick, Shields *et al.*,] *Informatory Vindication*, 234.

¹⁸ [John Pollock,] *An Answer to the First Part of Humble-Pleadings, or a Vindication of the Church of Scotland* (Dumfries, 1717); Raffé, 'Presbyterianism, Secularization, and Scottish Politics'.

¹⁹ Alasdair Raffé, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660-1714* (Woodbridge, 2012), 87-8. More generally, see Karin Bowie, 'A 1706 Manifesto for an Armed Rising against Incorporating Union', *Scottish Historical Review*, 94 (2015), 237-67; Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh, 2007).

²⁰ [Renwick, Shields *et al.*,] *Informatory Vindication*, 272-3; [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 105. For the commission's addresses, see Karin Bowie, ed., *Addresses against Incorporating Union, 1706-1707* (Scottish History Society, forthcoming 2018).

British parliament restored the right of lay patrons to present ministers to vacant parishes, which had been abolished in 1690 at the request of the presbyterians, and granted toleration for episcopalian worship.²¹ Once again, the Hebronites could object that Scotland was drifting away from Covenanted presbyterianism, and that the Kirk did too little to correct this trajectory. Though they addressed parliament against toleration, the ministers ‘pleaded not against it so Strenuously, nor on such Irrefragable Grounds, nor with such a deep concern, as the Importance of the thing, and their Station undenyably called for’. The clergy’s protests at the restoration of patronage were ‘very faint’.²² But the greatest offence to presbyterian sensitivities arising from the legislation of 1712 was the toleration act’s requirement that all Scottish ministers – presbyterians and tolerated episcopalians – swear an oath abjuring the Stuart Pretender and approving the Hanoverian succession. Because the oath originated in England, its text referred to the condition, specified by the act of settlement (1701), that future monarchs should communicate with the Church of England and swear the coronation oath in its defence. Presbyterian opponents of the abjuration oath alleged that ministers were being asked to condone English episcopacy; thus their swearing would contradict the presbyterian commitments included in the Covenants. The oath stimulated a major controversy within the Church, and around one third of presbyterian ministers refused to swear. Especially in the south-west, scrupulous lay presbyterians voiced their discontent with ministers who took the oath and those non-jurors who refused to condemn their juring brethren.²³ In their fulminations against the oath, as we shall see, the dissenters exposed a hostile attitude towards the Hanoverian succession.

On the eve of the George I’s accession, then, radical presbyterians expressed a set of robust criticisms of the Church of Scotland and the recent religious reforms. Their demands constituted an agenda too narrow and inflexible to be realistic after the revolution, when the Kirk was tasked with accommodating former episcopalians and the crown sought to exercise overall control of religious policy. It is worth repeating that the dissenters primarily objected to the constitution and government of the Church. Before the mid-1710s, dissidents could scarcely accuse mainstream clergy of theological error, though they claimed that Quakers and

²¹ For general discussions, see Laurence A.B. Whitley, *A Great Grievance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland until 1750* (Eugene, OR, 2013), chs 7-8; Jeffrey Stephen, *Defending the Revolution: The Church of Scotland, 1689-1716* (Farnham, 2013), ch. 4.

²² [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 106-7, 121.

²³ Raffé, *Culture of Controversy*, 90-1, 205-7. See also Alasdair Raffé, ‘Scottish State Oaths and the Revolution of 1688-1690’, in Sharon Adams and Julian Goodare (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Two Revolutions* (Woodbridge, 2014), 187-9.

heterodox episcopalians were treated too leniently, and alluded vaguely to presbyterian sermons in ‘a Legal Strain’, given by ‘*Laodicean Preachers*’.²⁴ The possibility of heresy within the Church reared its head in 1715, when the general assembly launched an investigation of the teachings of John Simson, professor of divinity at Glasgow University.²⁵ But while the Hebronites began to complain of Simson’s alleged errors, their case now rested very largely on the union and the abjuration oath.²⁶ In this respect, the grounds for withdrawing from the Kirk in the 1710s were fewer than those identified by the Seceders in the 1730s, by which time theological change and patronage were central to the arguments for separation.²⁷ But however small the range of grievances articulated by the dissenting presbyterians, their exaggerated demands for a pure Church brought about the first schism of the eighteenth century.

##

Though many presbyterians across Scotland sympathised with the dissidents’ views, the secession of the 1710s was concentrated in the south-western counties of Kirkcudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire. Its chief strongholds were the parishes held by Hepburn – Urr and the neighbouring Kirkgunzeon – and his allies John Taylor of Wamphray and James Gilchrist of Dunscore. None of these parishes had an obvious tradition of militant dissent extending back into the Restoration period.²⁸ That they now became centres of nonconformity suggests that the residents had been radicalised by recent events, under the influence of their ministers. The abjuration oath, and the behaviour of Taylor and Gilchrist in the debates it generated, were crucial in inspiring lay people to withdraw from the Church.

We can identify several reasons why ministers around Dumfries objected with particular vehemence to the oath. According to the well-informed contemporary minister Robert Wodrow, most clergy in the area had not, in the 1690s and early 1700s, been required to

²⁴ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 89-91, 93 (first quotation); [Renwick, Shields *et al.*,] *Informatory Vindication*, 270 (second quotation).

²⁵ Anne Skoczylas, *Mr Simson’s Knotty Case: Divinity, Politics, and Due Process in Early Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Montreal, 2001), chs 6-7.

²⁶ *Protesters Vindicated: or, A Just and Necessary Defence of Protesting Against, and Withdrawing from this National Church of Scotland* ([Edinburgh?], 1716), sigs. ++v.-[++2]r.; John Hepburn, *True Copy of a Letter sent to the Reverend Mr William Veitch* (Dumfries, 1719), 33-4.

²⁷ Stephen G. Myers, *Scottish Federalism and Covenantalism in Transition: The Theology of Ebenezer Erskine* (Cambridge, 2016), ch. 3; Whitley, *Great Grievance*, ch. 11.

²⁸ See Jardine, ‘United Societies’, appendix 7.7.

swear allegiance to the reigning monarchs, owing to selective enforcement of the law by the sheriff of Dumfries, the duke of Queensberry. The result was that ministers who had not previously been vulnerable to the radicals' criticism of the allegiance oath were, in 1712, unprepared for the dilemma of whether to take the more controversial oath of abjuration.²⁹ Among the ministers of Dumfries presbytery who swore, two wrote pamphlets defending this course of action and arguing against separation from the Church because of the oath.³⁰ These men, Alexander Robeson of Tinwald and John McMurdo of Torthorwald, confronted and publicly castigated Hepburn when he was preaching against the oath. They then wrote to Hepburn, querying his fidelity to presbyterian principles, and provoking him openly to denounce them in turn. Another juror, William Veitch of Dumfries, attacked Hepburn from his pulpit, and later published pamphlets calling the dissident's ordination into question.³¹ The unusually confrontational approach of the Dumfriesshire jurors stimulated a forceful response from determined non-jurors. Aside from Hepburn, at least seven ministers in the area temporarily stopped attending the church courts. In 1714, the general assembly appointed a committee to confer with this group; it succeeded in persuading several to resume cooperation with their juring brethren.³² As a result, the formal secession of ministers from the Church involved only Hepburn, Taylor, and Gilchrist.

As well as tensions among the clergy, the attitudes of the devout laity helped to fuel the divisions. Popular discontent with the union was widespread; it was further exacerbated by the heated exchanges over the oath. According to a paper drawn up by non-juring ministers, the laity's objections to the oath were so strong that, by swearing, clergy would risk putting a 'stumbling-block before' their parishioners, frustrating 'all good effects of our ministry among them'.³³ It became clear that many scrupulous lay people would refuse to hear jurors preach. And in extreme cases, parishioners withdrew from non-jurors who continued to

²⁹ Thomas M'Crie, ed., *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, 3 vols (Wodrow Society, 1842-3), II, 274. Cf. [?Alexander Robeson,] *Mene Tekel: or Separation weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary and found Wanting* (Dumfries, 1717), app., 26, 37, which alleged that Gilchrist had sworn the oath of allegiance.

³⁰ [Alexander Robeson,] *The Oath of Abjuration no Ground of Separation* (Kirkbride, 1713); [John McMurdo,] *An Answer to a Pamphlet, intituled, The Oath of Abjuration Displayed* ([Edinburgh?], 1713). The Dumfriesshire jurors are listed in William Veitch, *A Short History of Rome's Designs; against the Protestant Interest in Britain* (Dumfries, 1718), 11.

³¹ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. VII, John Flint to Robert Wodrow, 12 Jan. 1713, fo. 16r., James Hart to Robert Wodrow, 17 Jan. 1713, fos 23v.-24r.; M'Crie, ed., *Correspondence of Wodrow*, I, 376; [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, 270-1; Veitch, *Short History of Rome's Designs*; William Veitch, *A Short Answer; by William Vetch Minister of the Gospel at Drumfries* (Dumfries, 1720).

³² NRS, CH2/98/1, Dumfries synod minutes, 1691-1717, pp. 423, 440-2; *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, M.DC.XXXVIII.-M.DCCC.XLII* (Edinburgh, 1843), 489-90; McMillan, *John Hepburn and the Hebronites*, 159-64.

³³ M'Crie, ed., *Correspondence of Wodrow*, I, 644.

countenance their juring colleagues. Around Dumfries, one observer remarked, the non-juring ministers absented themselves from presbytery meetings with the jurors, because otherwise their ‘people would inteerly desert them’.³⁴

Emboldened – or perhaps cowed – by the strength of popular feeling, Taylor and Gilchrist were prepared to make a schism. Taylor seems to have had a strained relationship with his brethren in Lochmaben presbytery since at least 1711, when he allegedly forged a presbytery minute. He declined the abjuration oath, and began to argue in favour of separation from the jurors. The Selkirkshire minister Thomas Boston, who heard him publicly advocate withdrawing, thought that Taylor was ‘feeding the reeling, separating humour among the people’, in a manner ‘unbecoming a man of sense and consideration’.³⁵ In January 1715, the presbytery attempted to hold a visitation of Taylor’s parish. He refused to cooperate; apparently with his connivance, armed men occupied the church. Later, after he failed to appear to defend himself against the complaints of some of his parishioners, the presbytery suspended Taylor from the ministry. His case was then heard before the synod of Dumfries, which found that Taylor had unlawfully extended his glebe, and declared him guilty of irregularities in church discipline and indiscretions in his pronouncements from the pulpit. The synod deposed him from the ministry in April 1715.³⁶ Taylor’s opponents contended that he was a scandalous minister, who abused his position, held a grudge against his brethren, and saw the controversy about the abjuration oath as an opportunity ‘to be avenged on this Church’.³⁷

By the time of his deposition, Taylor had gained a steadfast ally in Gilchrist. Gilchrist had shunned the church courts since the imposition of the abjuration oath, and was not reconciled by the assembly’s committee in 1714. When Taylor was summoned before the synod, he and Gilchrist drew up a protestation against the court, in which they declined its authority because

³⁴ Raffé, *Culture of Controversy*, 206-7; NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. VII, Flint to Wodrow, 12 Jan. 1713, fo. 16r. (quotation).

³⁵ *Mr Taylor’s Case Stated, or A Reply to a Book, intituled, A Vindication of Mr John Taylor* (Dumfries, 1718), 9; Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of the Life, Time, and Writings of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Boston*, ed. George H. Morrison (Edinburgh, 1899), 272 (quotations).

³⁶ NRS, CH2/247/2, Lochmaben presbytery minutes, 1708-1718, pp. 256-7, 259-64; *The Sentence of Deposition, Past by the Synod of Drumfries, against Mr John Taylor* ([Dumfries?], 1715); *A Vindication of Mr John Taylor* ([Edinburgh?], 1717); *Mr Taylor’s Case Stated*.

³⁷ *Mr Taylor’s Case Stated*, 3-5, 9-10, quotation at 10.

of the ministers' 'notour and gross Defections from the *Covenanted Reformation*'.³⁸ The synod refused to receive the paper, and the two ministers publicly read it outside the church of Dumfries to a large gathering of 'Country People'.³⁹ Reports of the region's disorders reached the general assembly, which in May 1715 instructed the presbytery of Dumfries to prosecute Gilchrist for his 'irregular practices'.⁴⁰ The presbytery then drew up a libel against Gilchrist, mentioning his separatism and two cases in which he cheated poor parishioners. Seeking to frustrate the presbytery's action, Hepburn and Taylor convened a court of their own at Dunscore, Gilchrist's parish, and proceeded to try the libel. A body of the parishioners presented a paper in which they disowned the authority of Dumfries presbytery over Gilchrist, and submitted his case to Hepburn and Taylor. Their newly formed presbytery then cleared Gilchrist of the charges in the libel.⁴¹ Few witnesses cooperated with the official investigation of Gilchrist, but the presbytery of Dumfries continued its process, deposing him from the ministry in September 1716.⁴² He ignored this outcome and preached as before. In May 1717, he and Taylor were cited before the court of justiciary for intruding on their former parishes. Refusing to appear, they were declared outlaws.⁴³ Neither of his sentences deterred Gilchrist, and the presbytery resorted to excommunicating him in 1718.⁴⁴

The events just described led supporters of Hepburn, Taylor, and Gilchrist to defend full separation from the Church. This was an advance on the Hebronites' earlier principle, which was 'to own what was good in both Church and State, and to protest and bear Witness against the Defections of both, by pleading in face of Judicatories for Redress of Grievances'. The Hebronites had not seen reason 'entirely to decline' the church courts 'as incompetent or totally corrupt'.⁴⁵ Now, however, Hepburn's allies justified secession on three grounds. First, they maintained that the union had corrupted the Kirk's constitution. This claim depended on a distorted interpretation of the events of 1706-7, according to which parliament's act of security for the Church, passed to allay presbyterian fears, had made the Kirk complicit in the union. Defenders of the Church denied that its ministers approved

³⁸ *The Sentence of Deposition, by the Presbytery of Drumfries against Mr James Gilchrist* ([Dumfries?], 1716); *The Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist* ([Dumfries?], 1716), 6 (quotation).

³⁹ *Sentence of Deposition ... against Mr James Gilchrist*, 2.

⁴⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 506.

⁴¹ *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 8-23, 44-5.

⁴² *Sentence of Deposition ... against Mr James Gilchrist*, [1].

⁴³ NRS, JC12/2, Minute book of the southern circuit of the court of justiciary, 1711-1718, pp. 174-5.

⁴⁴ *An Abstract of the Presbytery of Drumfries's Proceedings, in the Process of the Excommunication of Mr James Gilchrist* ([Dumfries?], [1719]).

⁴⁵ [Mitchell,] *Humble Pleadings for the Good Old-Way*, sig. [**2]r.

anything sinful in the union. But the separatists insisted that the ‘National Church hath gone into, accepted of, and relies upon that Act of Security’; the Church had entered ‘into the legal Establishment of an *incorporating* UNION with the Prelatick Constitution of *England*’.⁴⁶ The separatists’ second reason for withdrawing was that a majority of clergy had sworn the abjuration oath. Hepburn’s associates took it for granted that the oath was in support of Anglicanism as well as the Hanoverian succession. In the overstated terms of a pamphlet defending Gilchrist, the oath ‘obligeth all Jurants to maintain *English* Erastian Supremacy, Prelacy and Popish Ceremonies’.⁴⁷ Third, the separatists asserted that an act of the 1714 general assembly requiring non-jurors to keep communion with the jurors was tyrannical, because it forced conscientious clergy and lay people to recognise corrupt ministers.⁴⁸

The desire of Taylor and Gilchrist to continue preaching, in spite of censure by the church courts, led the dissenting ministers to form their own presbytery. Taylor and Gilchrist said that the injustice of the processes against them ‘Provoked’, or even ‘Necessitated’, their allies to take this step.⁴⁹ As this suggests, all the documented meetings of the presbytery were preoccupied with exonerating Taylor and Gilchrist from the established Church’s allegations against them. The presbytery gathered in June 1715 to vindicate Taylor, after his deposition from the ministry. The presbytery met again in July to try the libel against Gilchrist, and for a third time in October 1716, in the wake of his deposition.⁵⁰ It is unclear whether the court conducted any other business. Significantly, the presbytery seems not to have made preparations to ordain ministers, even though several students and preachers on probation joined themselves with the three dissidents.⁵¹ By 1718, one of Taylor’s critics could write that the ‘*Presbytrie of Protesters*’ had fallen silent, and that some participants – presumably some of the lay elders involved – now saw its actions as irregular. There had been, after all, only two clerical members of the presbytery, because either Taylor or Gilchrist had been under its investigation.⁵² But Gilchrist cited a work by George Gillespie, the mid-

⁴⁶ *Protesters Vindicated*, 9-10, 29; [?Robeson,] *Mene Tekel*, part 1, 25-6. For the act of security for the Church, see *RPS*, 1706/10/251.

⁴⁷ *Protesters Vindicated*, 10; *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 17 (quotation).

⁴⁸ *Protesters Vindicated*, 10, 81-4; *Acts of the General Assembly*, 489-90.

⁴⁹ *Sentence of Deposition ... against Mr John Taylor*, 2; *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 9.

⁵⁰ *Answers for Mr John Taylor and his Adherents, to a Pamphlet, intituled, A Letter from a Gentleman in Dumfries, to a Friend in Edinburgh* ([Edinburgh?,] 1727), 15; *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 9-10, 23, 24, 47; *Vindication of Mr John Taylor*, 72-4.

⁵¹ See [Pollock,] *Answer to the First Part of Humble-Pleadings*, 34. Another hostile source implied that the presbytery had met on a further occasion at Sanquhar, and was willing to ordain ministers: [?Robeson,] *Mene Tekel*, app., 33, 38.

⁵² *Mr Taylor’s Case Stated*, 77; cf. Boston, *Memoirs*, 273.

seventeenth-century presbyterian authority, to prove that two ministers could form a legitimate presbytery.⁵³

As this appeal to Gillespie indicates, the separatists justified their actions with reference to celebrated churchmen of the past. There was a precedent for Taylor's declining the authority of the synod of Dumfries, his adherents suggested, in John Knox, whose *Appellation* (1558) had declared the Catholic hierarchy unworthy to convict him of heresy.⁵⁴ More importantly, the Dumfries dissidents argued that secession from the Church in the 1710s was warranted for the same reasons that the Protesters disowned the Resolutioners in the 1650s. This schism had seen the Protesters, a radical minority, secede from the church courts, after moderate members of the general assembly's commission passed a 'public resolution' approving the civil authorities' desire to employ former opponents of the Covenants in the Scottish army. Hard-liners interpreted the resolution as a defection from Covenanting principles, which required Scots to avoid sinful associations with enemies of the cause. When the commission cited critics of the resolution to be judged before the 1651 assembly, thus preventing them from sitting as members, the radicals submitted a protestation, rejecting the lawfulness of the 'prelimited' assembly. The 'Protesters' set up their own courts in parallel to those of their opponents, now named 'Resolutioners'.⁵⁵ The dispute was the major seventeenth-century case of separation among presbyterians, and it is unsurprising that Hepburn's associates attempted to gain legitimacy by posing as the heirs of the Protesters.

According to *Protesters Vindicated*, the most substantial apology for the Dumfries separatists, the Church's complicity in the union closely resembled the commission's error in passing the resolution of December 1650. The general assembly at present carried on like the 'Assembly of Publick Resolutioners' of that time. For this reason, the book urged readers to recall the Protesters' case. *Protesters Vindicated* quoted at length from a major statement of their views, *Protesters no Subverters* (1658), appropriating its argument that members of a Church have a duty to disregard any decisions of its courts that were contrary to God's

⁵³ *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 29; see also *Protesters Vindicated*, 247-8. George Gillespie, *Aarons Rod Blossoming. Or, The Divine Ordinance of Church-Government Vindicated* (London, 1646), 416-17.

⁵⁴ *Answers for Mr John Taylor and his Adherents*, 12-13; John Knox, *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge, 1994), 72-114, esp. 76; Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, CT, 2015), 156-7.

⁵⁵ *The Protestation of Diverse Ministers, against the Proceedings of the Late Commission of the Church of Scotland: as also against the Lawfulness of the Present Pretended Assembly* (Leith, 1651). For narratives of the dispute, see Holfelder, 'Factionalism in the Kirk', and more generally David Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland, 1644-1651* (London, 1977), chs 5-6.

word.⁵⁶ Gilchrist made especially provocative use of the Protesters, claiming that the church courts of the mid-1710s erred more seriously than had the commission in 1650. Specifically, he asserted that the general assembly's act of 1715, which instructed Dumfries presbytery to prosecute him, was 'Establishing Tyranny into a Law'. Because of this measure, he continued, he and his fellow 'Protesting Ministers' had 'far more Weighty Grounds' for separating than the earlier Protesters had, though the latter's reasons were sufficient. The Resolutioners were 'not guilty of so many and gross Defections as the present National Church'. To condemn him and his allies, Gilchrist averred, would be to brand 'Famous Mrs Rutherford, Cant, Gillespie, Fergusson' as 'Scandalous Schismatics'.⁵⁷ Given the high regard of many in the post-revolution Church for the leading Protesters, this comparison was shrewd, if overblown. Answering on behalf of the Church, one writer insisted that 'We are not tyed to the Judgement of the *Protesters*'. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the piety and learning of their leaders, expressing particular respect for Samuel Rutherford.⁵⁸ If the Protesters acted faithfully in the 1650s, perhaps their self-styled successors were also in the right.

##

Before we assess the significance of the Dumfries separatists in the fragmentation of Scottish protestantism, we should examine in more detail the dissidents' attitudes towards the Hanoverian succession. As we have seen, radical discontent rested on a perception that union and the abjuration oath required presbyterian Scots to compromise with the English episcopalian culture against which the nation had sworn in the Covenants. The Hanoverian succession – which the union was meant to establish and the oath to guarantee – was tainted by association. The manner of George I's accession was at odds with the radical presbyterians' understanding of the Scottish constitution.

⁵⁶ *Protesters Vindicated*, 93-8, quotation at 93; *Protesters no Subverters, and Presbyterie no Papacie; or, A Vindication of the Protesting Brethren* (Edinburgh, 1658), 95-112.

⁵⁷ *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 28-9, 34. The Protesters referred to are Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600-1661), Andrew Cant (1584/1590-1663), Patrick Gillespie (1617-1675). The last name seems to be that of James Fergusson (1621-67), who sided with the Resolutioners. For other comparisons with the Protesters and Resolutioners, see: *Vindication of Mr John Taylor*, 5, 71, 73; *Some Gleanings of the Last Words of the Worthy and Reverend Mr James Gilchrist* ([Edinburgh?], [1721?]), 8; Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1827), I, xxvi.

⁵⁸ [?Robeson,] *Mene Tekel*, app., 22 (quotation), 24, 34.

For the United Societies and the followers of Hepburn, the fundamental principle governing succession to the Scottish throne was that monarchs should profess the same religion as their people. This rule, the dissidents argued, had been imposed after the accession of James VI in 1567, when parliament approved a coronation oath requiring the king to maintain the religion taught in his kingdom.⁵⁹ But it was not enough for the monarch to be protestant rather than Catholic. The radicals insisted that Scotland's rulers should be presbyterians who had sworn the Covenants. As *Protesters Vindicated* put it, 'the Just and Lawful Right that the Kings of Scotland ought to have, is founded on the Word of GOD, and our Covenants National and Solemn League'.⁶⁰ This argument was based on the accession and coronation of Charles II. In February 1649, the Scottish parliament passed an act regretting the religious differences between the recently executed Charles I and his subjects. In order to achieve the aims of the coronation oath, parliament resolved, Charles's heir would be required to acknowledge the Covenants and promise to govern in accordance with presbyterian values. Though Charles II was reluctant to comply with these strictures, he eventually took the Covenants. At his coronation in January 1651, he swore to uphold presbyterian government, and to allow its promotion in England and Ireland.⁶¹ It was this sort of commitment to presbyterianism that gave legitimacy to a Scottish ruler. Though the tests demanded of Charles derived explicitly from statutes, their accordance with the Covenants led presbyterian hard-liners to see them as matters of fundamental law. It was therefore illegitimate for parliament – in the Restoration period or through the union – to alter the terms by which monarchs were admitted to rule. Parliament simply did not have the power 'to destroy the *National Constitutions*, and to rescind the *Fundamental Laws* of the Realm'.⁶²

George I's claim to the throne, being based on the union, was unlawful. He was not required to become a presbyterian, and instead was expected to support English episcopacy and participate in Anglican worship. For the presbyterian radicals, George's compliance with these '*English Regulations and Limitations of Government*' disqualified him from the Scottish throne. Yet it was in favour of the English rules that jurors among the Scottish

⁵⁹ [Hugh Clark,] *A Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians of the Established Church an Elder and a Preacher* ([Edinburgh?], 1714), 14-15, 20; RPS, A1567/12/7.

⁶⁰ *Protesters Vindicated*, 47.

⁶¹ [Clark,] *Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians*, 17-21; *Protesters Vindicated*, 71-2; RPS, 1649/1/78; *The Form and Order of the Coronation of Charles the Second* (Aberdeen, 1651), 67-8.

⁶² [Clark,] *Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians*, 18-19.

clergy had sworn.⁶³ While members of the two dissident groups agreed on these points, Hebronite polemicists were slightly more accommodating of political reality. *Protesters Vindicated* acknowledged that George was the nearest protestant heir to Anne, and claimed that Hebronites would readily swear allegiance if he were invested with royal authority as Charles II had been.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the Societies protested that George, as a German Lutheran, was ignorant of Scots' civil rights.⁶⁵ The point was made forcefully in the declaration of an extremist off-shoot of the Societies, which condemned as an 'imprudent Abandoning of civil Liberty' the putting it 'into the Hands of one of tyrannical Education and Disposition'.⁶⁶

The radicals' understanding of accession to the Scottish throne was recognisably that advanced by the Cameronians in the 1680s.⁶⁷ Now, as then, critics asserted that their interpretation was incompatible with the Westminster confession of faith. The fourth article of the confession's twenty-third chapter stated that 'Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them'.⁶⁸ Hugh Clark, writing on behalf of the Societies, admitted that this was a weak spot – an '*Achillean Topic*' – in their ideological armour.⁶⁹ But Clark and his Hebronite counterparts thought that the apparent contradiction could be easily resolved. The confession taught that primitive Christians had owed obedience to pagan rulers, and early protestants to Catholic magistrates, their authority resting on natural law and the fifth commandment. But in Covenanted Scotland no monarch could attain 'just and legal authority' without making the promises demanded of Charles II.⁷⁰ No allegiance was due to a monarch whose claim was not founded on the presbyterian reading of the constitution.

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⁶³ *The True Copy of the Declaration Published at Auchensauigh nigh Douglas upon the Twenty Fourth Day of July 1718* ([Edinburgh?], 1719), 10 (quotation), 19-20; *Protesters Vindicated*, 70, 76-7.

⁶⁴ *Protesters Vindicated*, 70, 76.

⁶⁵ *True Copy of the Declaration Published at Auchensauigh*, 19.

⁶⁶ *The Declaration, Protestation and Testimony of a Poor Wasted, Desolate, Misrepresented and Reproached Remnant* ([Edinburgh?], [1715?]), 9. For the group responsible, see Somerset, 'Notes on some Scottish Covenanters', 117-18.

⁶⁷ See e.g. [Renwick, Shields *et al.*,] *Informatory Vindication*, 195-7.

⁶⁸ S.W. Carruthers, ed., *The Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster* (Glasgow, 1978), 19.

⁶⁹ [Clark,] *Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians*, 23.

⁷⁰ *Protesters Vindicated*, 238-9, 241-3; [Clark,] *Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians*, 17-18, 23.

In the unstable Scotland of the mid-1710s, the radical presbyterians' opinions about the succession mattered. The printed controversy over the Dumfries schism made clear that the new separatists held essentially the same views about the Scottish throne as the United Societies, whose declarations had consistently disowned all monarchs since Charles II. Neither the Societies nor the Hebronites favoured the Stuart claimants; both strongly denied holding Jacobite or anti-monarchical principles.⁷¹ Nevertheless, apologists for the Kirk accused the separatists of giving succour to Jacobitism, while politicians and government informants were uncertain about what the radicals might do in the event of a rising.⁷² The Dumfries region concerned the authorities because of its concentration of Catholic and Jacobite landowners, and as an entry point to Scotland for English Jacobites. In 1715, to the relief of the government, the dissident presbyterians refused to support the rebellion.⁷³ About 300 of Hepburn's followers formed themselves into companies, ostensibly to oppose the Jacobites. When the enemy drew near to Dumfries, however, the Hebronites declared that they had not 'Freedom in their Consciences to fight in Defence of the Constitution of Church and State, as establish'd since the sinful Union'. Fortunately the town's security did not depend on their equivocal contribution.⁷⁴

The schism of the 1710s did not create a lasting denomination. Gilchrist died in 1721, Hepburn in 1723. Taylor, probably the least convincing of the dissenting ministers, remained a separatist until his death in 1745, but his followers divided and dwindled in number.⁷⁵ A network of Hebronite societies continued to exist, apparently without clerical leadership, before associating itself with the Secession Church in the 1730s.⁷⁶ This development points to the similarities between the Dumfries schism and later protestant secessions. Hepburn and his colleagues maintained that the Church was becoming corrupt, that its faults were now so severe as to justify separation. The Seceders of the 1730s agreed with many of the Hebronites' criticisms, and identified further reasons for withdrawing from the Church.

⁷¹ *True Copy of the Declaration Published at Auchensauigh*, 22-3; [Clark,] *Converse betwixt Two Presbyterians*, 11-12; *Protesters Vindicated*, sig. ++r.; *Vindication of Mr James Gilchrist*, 47.

⁷² [Robeson,] *Mene Tekel*, part 1, 72-3; *Mr Taylor's Case Stated*, 13; Szechi, 1715, 42-3.

⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP54/9, fo. 60, Letter from John Stirling, 7 Oct. 1715; SP54/7, fo. 25, Adam Cockburn to the duke of Montrose, 3 Aug. 1715.

⁷⁴ Peter Rae, *The History of the Late Rebellion; Rais'd against His Majesty King George, by the Friends of the Popish Pretender* (Dumfries, 1718), 256, 275-6, quotation at 276; McMillan, *John Hepburn and the Hebronites*, 181-4; Szechi, 1715, 114, 171.

⁷⁵ Hepburn, *Last Testimony*; *Some Gleanings of the Last Words of Gilchrist*; *Answers for Mr John Taylor and his Adherents*.

⁷⁶ Boston, *Memoirs*, 450-1; NRS, CH3/27/1, Associate Presbytery minutes, 1733-1740, pp. 149, 248, 284, 295, 311.

Eighteenth-century presbyterian schismatics, then, traded in narratives of decline. Defending the Church in 1717, the minister John Pollock accused Hepburn and his associates of imposing ‘upon poor People, by making them believe, That we are Degenerated from the purest Times’.⁷⁷ Like the Seceders after them, however, the Hebronites made a compelling appeal to a section of the presbyterian laity, by telling them what they wanted to hear.

The response of Gilchrist and Taylor to the Church’s alleged decline illustrates another cause of the fragmentation of Scottish protestantism. By rejecting the Dumfries synod’s authority, the two ministers expressed their disapproval of the attitudes and conduct of their brethren. But if the guilty could simply decline the courts before which they were tried, their critics pointed out, there would be no way to maintain ecclesiastical discipline.⁷⁸ Likewise, if minorities refused to accept majority decisions, or to work with the ministers responsible for those decisions, the unity of the Church would be undermined. And yet the Protesters of the 1650s had apparently set a precedent for conscientious dissent from the church courts’ actions, while providing an orthodox example of separation to form new structures. Was it truer to presbyterian principles to seek unity through compromise, or purity through protest?

The importance of Taylor and Gilchrist was that they took the second path. They consciously followed the example of the Protesters, though they were a tiny group by comparison. Their actions prefigured the other eighteenth-century secessions from the Church of Scotland. In each instance, matters of conscience provoked a minister or small body of clergy to leave the Church. In the case of the Seceders, the courts’ rebuke of Ebenezer Erskine for preaching against the Kirk’s faults prompted him and three allies to protest and separate. It was the conscientious refusal of Thomas Gillespie to induct the choice of the lay patron to the vacant parish of Inverkeithing that led to his deposition from the ministry in 1752.⁷⁹ Like the Dumfriesshire ministers, the Seceders and Gillespie set up presbyterian structures outwith the Church. The same was not true of John Glas, who adopted Independent views, but his deposition in 1730 had also come about because he dissented on points of principle.⁸⁰ Though it did not result in a new Church, the Dumfries schism confirmed the pattern that later denomination-makers would follow.

⁷⁷ [Pollock,] *Answer to the First Part of Humble-Pleadings*, 26.

⁷⁸ *Mr Taylor’s Case Stated*, 9.

⁷⁹ See Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church in 18th Century Scotland* (Bern, 1999).

⁸⁰ See e.g. Derek B. Murray, ‘The Influence of John Glas’, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 22 (1984-6), 45-56.

The years around George I's accession thus constituted a turning point in Scottish religious life. In Anne's reign, especially after the toleration act of 1712, episcopalianism was the major challenge to the dominance of the presbyterian Church. Far from seeking comprehension within the establishment, as large numbers had in the early 1690s, many episcopalians now rejected presbyterian norms in worship and theology. Had the rising of 1715 been successful, episcopalians would have won a far stronger position, if not total control of the Kirk. But after the Jacobite catastrophe of the '15, presbyterian dissent became the main motor driving the further fragmentation of Scottish protestantism. The number of episcopalian dissenters started to decline, while the chief schisms of the eighteenth century produced new presbyterian denominations, rather than fresh recruits to the Episcopal Church. In 1765, when the general assembly proposed to investigate the problem of schism, it was estimated that there were over 100,000 presbyterian nonconformists. Probably they now outnumbered the episcopalians.⁸¹ It was these presbyterian dissenters who were the chief beneficiaries of the toleration act of 1712. While the successful achievement of the Hanoverian succession disappointed episcopalians, it ushered in a period of increasing protestant pluralism.

⁸¹ *Scots Magazine*, 27 (1765), 277; Alasdair Raffe, 'Scotland', in Jeremy Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism: Volume II: Establishment and Empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford, 2017), 155.